A R K A N S A S

Office Locations:
Camden, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Jonesboro, Little Rock

ARKANSAS MANUFACTURING EXTENSION NETWORK (THE NETWORK) Serves firms throughout Arkansas through five field offices. Affiliated with the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority. Contact: Lydia Carson, 423 Main Street, Suite 200, Little Rock, AR, 72201, Phone: (501) 683-4400, Fax: (501) 683-4422, E-mail: lydia.carson@mail.state.ar.us, Website: http://www.mfgsolutions.org

COMPANY CLIPS

Lewis Milling Renovates Mill, Creates 30 Jobs

Lewis Milling processes raw rice to produce polished or brown rice. The rice is bulk-shipped or packaged in either small or large bags. The company, located in Earle, employs approximately 30 people. Lewis Milling is a new business, recently launched thanks to the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta (ECD), which provided construction funds, followed by long-term financing by the USDA to provide an invaluable employment opportunity to this economically challenged area of the Mississippi River delta. Although Mr. Lewis previously owned and operated a rice mill, he needed technical support to design and construct the mill. The ECD referred Mr. Lewis to the Arkansas Manufacturing Extension Network (the Network) for technical assistance to build his mill.

The Network met with Mr. Lewis to review the mill's preliminary plans and to examine the building and equipment located at the site. Mr. Lewis needed help selecting a consulting engineering firm capable of providing the detailed design drawings required to select additional equipment, expand the building, and construct the mill. The Network agreed to help Lewis Milling select an engineering firm, represent Mr. Lewis to the selected firm during the design process, assist in the selection of a general contractor, and provide technical support during construction and mill start-up.

Once the Network selected a consulting engineering firm, the design phase began with the initial transfer of design goals to the consultants, field trips to examine the existing structures, and collection of detailed information about process equipment previously purchased. Upon completion of the design phase, the Network participated in the transfer of information to general contractors, the review of quotes, and the selection of a contractor. Unfortunately, the quotes were all for approximately twice the available funds. The Network subsequently met and worked with several of the general contractors to determine what changes, if any, could result in a functional mill for the available funds. These meetings resulted in one contractor reducing the cost of the original quote by approximately 40 percent, bringing the cost within budget.

Continued

THE MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP IN ARKANSAS

Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a nationwide system of services and support for smaller manufacturers to become more globally competitive. At the heart of the system is a network of affiliated, locally-based manufacturing extension centers. Each center, like The Network, is a partnership, typically involving federal, state, and local governments; industry; educational institutions; and other sources of expertise, information and funding support.

STATE STATS

DATA* COVERS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2001

Number of projects completed with firms
231

Number of firms served
195

Number of firms served for the first time
67

Federal cost share for current operating year
$577,300

State/other cost share for current operating year
$1,154,600

**Data as reported from center*

DATA** COVERS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2001

Increased sales & retained sales
$52,748,076

Client capital investment
$11,016,517

Total cost savings
$8,128,009

Jobs (created & retained)
843

***Source: Independent client impact survey*

For additional information, contact Dede McMahon 301-975-5020

Over the months that followed, construction continued with the expansion of the facilities, construction of support structures for the equipment, and installation of the equipment. During this period, the Network kept in constant contact with Mr. Lewis, representatives of ECD, and the general contractor to review progress on the mill and equipment installations, take photographs to document the work, and transmit status reports (with photographs) to the parties involved. Finally, the mill was completed, and now 30 new employees work to produce five metric tons of brown or white rice per hour.

Rockline Industries Wipes Out Inefficiency With Lean Training

Rockline Industries, Inc. is a manufacturer of branded and private label consumer wet wipe products. Located in Springdale, the company employs less than 500 people. Rockline Industries learned about lean manufacturing concepts while attending an open-enrollment Lean 101 course hosted by the Arkansas Manufacturing Extension Network (the Network) at a local community college. Rockline's engineers believed lean manufacturing would benefit the company by helping employees identify ways to improve workflow and eliminate wastes. Following the course, Rockline Industries decided to bring the Network into the plant to conduct on-site lean training for all its employees.

The Network met with Rockline's training manager, Marion Cowan, to formulate a training plan, and engaged a local community college and training consortium to jointly organize the many training sessions. The community college obtained financial assistance on behalf of Rockline Industries from the Arkansas Department of Economic Development's Existing Workforce Training Program. This grant made training for Rockline's many employees affordable.

The Network conducted classroom presentations and hands-on simulations of basic lean manufacturing principles during the Lean 101 course sessions. It also trained key Rockline employees in more advanced lean techniques such as setup reduction, total productive maintenance (TPM), value stream mapping, and 5S (an organizational lean technique). Following Lean 101 training, the Network—with assistance from newly trained Rockline staff—conducted an assessment of the company's work areas and applied lean practices to the company's production floor, including 5S, SMED, and TPM. Since then, the company has experienced a significant reduction in waste, increased its productivity, and improved the use of its space to become cleaner and more efficient.